

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2792

As Reported by House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to collaboration among public and private providers of child welfare services.

Brief Description: Initiating a process to develop collaboration among public and private providers of child welfare services.

Sponsors: Representatives Kagi, Boldt, Dickerson, Shabro, Darneille, Roach, Pettigrew, Bailey, Cody, McIntire, Moeller, Schual-Berke, Chase, Kenney and Morrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 1/26/04, 1/28/04 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to convene DSHS staff and community-based agency staff to develop recommended policies and protocols concerning collaborative decision making.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Boldt, Ranking Minority Member; Roach, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Dickerson, Miloscia, Pettigrew and Shabro.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to provide child welfare services throughout the state. Child welfare services are provided for the purpose of:

- preventing or remedying, or assisting in the solution of, problems that may result in families in conflict, or the neglect, abuse, exploitation, or criminal behavior of children;
- protecting and caring for dependent or neglected children;
- assisting children who are in conflict with their parents, and assisting parents who are in conflict with their children with services designed to resolve those conflicts;

- protecting and promoting the welfare of children, including the strengthening of their own homes where possible or where needed; and
- providing adequate care of children away from their homes in foster family homes or day care or other child care agencies or facilities.

Services provided to children and families in the state are provided by both staff of the DSHS and by community-based agencies under contract with the DSHS, with over 50 percent of the budget of the Children's Administration of the DSHS used to fund contracted services.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The DSHS is required to convene regional and local DSHS staff and community-based agency staff to develop recommended policies and protocols concerning collaborative decision making relating to both administrative processes and services provided to families, including, but not limited to, contracting practices, referral practices, and resource allocation.

The DSHS is required to submit its recommended policies and protocols to the Governor and the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2004.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The DSHS is not required to develop recommended policies and protocols concerning integration of research-based practices into child welfare throughout the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Original bill) This bill addresses the question how work in the field, which is conducted by both DSHS staff and community-based agency staff, can be improved. In some areas around the state, there is a lack of communication. There is a need for consistency, which would result in better utilization of resources. In the past, the DSHS has operated unilaterally, without consulting providers. Fairly immediate progress is sought with respect to collaboration with the DSHS. Collaboration is such an important part of the provision of services. Providers have had to go through the Legislature to get access to information and assistance from the DSHS. The time frame in the bill works, if all of the parties are working together. There are wonderful examples of collaboration and partnerships of DSHS staff, providers, families, and communities; however, there are also examples of unilateral decision making by the DSHS. Collaboration will result in better services provided and better utilization of those services.

(With concerns) The DSHS has been working on the issue of collaboration both in response to past legislation and on its own initiative. The requirements of this bill are similar to work that is already going on, but it is wider in scope. In order to fulfill the requirements of the bill within the provided time frame, additional resources would be required.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Kagi, prime sponsor; Seth Dawson, Washington State Coalition for Children's Residential Services, Deaconess Children's Services, Youth Care, and Ruth Dykeman Children's Center; Kevin Glackin-Coley, Children's Alliance; Donna Christensen, Washington Catholic Conference; Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; and Mary Fischer, Institute for Family Development.

(With concerns) Uma Ahluwalia, Department of Social and Health Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.